

SOUTH INDIA IN RAMAYANA

K.V. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

1.1 In the study of sojourn of Rama from Ayodhya to Lanka, scholars of both Indian and foreign have tried to identify the location of different places, mountains, rivers and forests with the present ones by a critical reading of Ramayanic verses. Though unanimously agreed with each other about the sojourn of Rama from Ayodhya to Panchavati, they differ in locating other places, thereafter

1.2 The existing theories¹ connecting the sojourn of Rama, (a) restrict him within North India by locating Lanka at Amarakantaka, (b) within the boundaries of Godavari by locating Lanka at the mouth of it, (c) take him to South India by identifying Ceylon with Ravana's Lanka and (d) locate Lanka on equator. If Lanka had to be located in the immediate south of the Vindhya at Amarakantaka or elsewhere, then Godavari, Krauncha forest, Matanga Ashram, Pampa Lake, Sabari Ashram, Rsyamukha Mountain, Saptajana Ashram, Kishkinda, Prasaravana mountain, Sahya, Malaya and Mahendra mountains must have been located either in the northern part of or to the north of the Vindhya, with the implying argument that Rama did not come to South India. But the main propounders of such theories like Sardar Kibe, Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, Hiralal and Sankalia were unable to locate these places and explained away these names, not as proper names, but as common nouns.

1.3 In Valmiki Ramayana, the route from Panchavati to southern ocean is described in the cases of sojourn of Rama, Ravana and Hanuman. Besides the mentioned mountains, rivers and forests, Valmiki himself gives the details of others in between².

1.4 **The Route of Ravana:** Instigated by Surpanaka, Ravana decided to abduct Sita with the help of Maricha. Accordingly, both, crossing cities, forests and mountains reached Dandakaranya. Maricha tricked Rama away from the hermitage and then Lakshmana. Meanwhile, Ravana entered the hermitage in disguise and was invited by Sita, but was then refused, when he came out with his desire. So, Ravana, started boasting of himself, telling that he was a half-brother of Kubera and he only made him to leave Lanka and occupied it³. Also, he told that beyond the sea stood his beautiful capital Lanka⁴.

But, as Sita twitted him sharply, he got angry and took her away by force. Encounter with Jatayu followed. Later not finding any saviour while being carried away by Ravana, Sita saw five vanaras sitting on a mountain peak. She threw her jewels in their midst. Having passed beyond the Pampa lake, Ravana proceeded with his face towards the city of Lanka. Coursing through the air like an arrow shot from a bow, and leaving behind terrestrial variants, he reached the ocean. While Sita was being carried away, the ocean found its billows brought to a standstill and its fishes and large aquatic serpents rendered motionless due to fear. Crossing this ocean, Ravana reached Lanka. The mention of crossing the ocean and its billows and the description of oceanic species should be noted here⁵.

1.5 **The Route of Hanuman:** As per the instruction of Sugriva, the search party which went in the southern quarter under Angatha and Hanuman strictly followed the same route. But after searching in the Vindhya region thoroughly, entered Rksabala cave and lost their way. They were informed by Sampati that his son Suparswa saw Ravana carrying a young lady in Southern direction. Encouraged by him, the party continued their search in the southern direction and reached the southern ocean. Hanuman climbed up the Mahendra mountain and reached Lanka. He found Sita in Ashokavana, returned with his colleagues and informed Sugriva and Rama. Then Rama decided to march towards Lanka with army.

1.6 **The Route of Rama:** In the verses of Yuddhakan-da, Valmiki clearly describes the movement of Rama and his army from Kishkinda to Lanka. Getting information about Lanka from Hanuman and having discussions with Sugriva, Rama sallied forth with his army in a southerly direction. Avoiding the precincts of cities as well as the rural parts, the army crossed the rivers. On their way, the rivers' currents were flowing in the opposite direction⁷. Here, Valmiki gives a list of many trees, creepers, flowers, birds and animals⁸. The various species mentioned indicate hilly areas and ocean. Coming to Rama's march, the army crossed Sahya, Malaya and Mahendra mountains and reached the southern ocean.

1.7 Calculation of distances: The calculation of distances in yojanas and its conversion to miles vary from author to author. Moreover, Valmiki never mentions the distances between all places meticulously in Yojanas, Krosas or otherwise. In many places, he simply explains away by mentioning that they covered forests, rivers, mountains even without naming them. Therefore from the mentioned verses about distances in Yojanas or Krosas, one cannot make out much, as he is silent about distances in other places. One Yojana equals to 4, 4.5, 5, 7, 8, 9 and even 14.5 miles, according to various authorities. In literary sense, it is used to join the places or preparing and arranging for a journey from one place to another. So, based on the calculation of distances in Yojanas or otherwise any attempt to restrict the sojourn of Rama is not sustainable.

1.8 Disposal of Dead: Here, scholars try to interpret by bringing extraneous hypotheses and theories to prove that the custom of burial and other connected rituals belong to one particular race and cremation to other. They argue that cremation was unknown to Dravidians and only Rama introduced the Aryan practice among them and therefore Valmiki had no Knowledge of Dravidians and hence South India⁹. The Kibe supporters make a great fuss about the so called "Aryan rites" conducted for Jatayu and later for Valli¹⁰. But, significantly Sugriva himself said that he did "Tarpanam" for Valli, thinking that his brother was killed by Mayavi¹¹. This was before the coming of Rama to Kishkinda. So even before the coming of Rama to South India, the rites and customs to be performed for dead were known to them. Moreover, when Valli returned after killing Mayavi, Sugriva greeted him with due reverence, benedictions and "Abivada Vandanam"¹². It is nothing but reverential salutation to superior or elder by an inferior or junior or to a teacher by his disciple. All these go to prove that Dravidians were following the so called "Aryan rites", even before Rama came to South India. Megalithic and neolithic cultures cannot be confined in this regard only to South India, as now they have been found even in North India. So based on these evidences, one cannot unilaterally declare that Rama did not come to South India.

1.9 The Direction of flow of rivers: Staying at Mount Prasravana, Rama described the flow of a river in the easterly direction¹³. If Kishkinda had to be located in North India, then the direction of the flow of river would not be in eastern direction. And again, when Rama marched with his army towards Lanka, Valmiki mentions, "...the rivers on the way with their currents flowing in the opposite direction"¹⁴. Here the important point to be noticed is that the mention of the direction of the rivers.

In South India rivers originate from west, flow towards east and reach the Bay of Bengal. If one carefully watches the rivers at the place of origin, first they flow in a north - eastern direction and then turn towards east. That is why Valmiki clearly mentions that the currents flowed in the opposite direction, when the army crossed the rivers.

Places:

2.1 Janasthana: It means 'Human habitation' was a part of the great Dandakaranya which stood in the vicinity of Prasravana. The celebrated Panchavati (identified with the place of the same name situated about two miles from Nasik) stands in this tract. Janasthana was the place, where Ravana kept his army.

2.2 Pampa: From Janasthana, after crossing Krauncha forest, one can reach Rsyamukha Range. Crossing a forest and wood land, Pampa can be reached. To the east of Pampa stands Rsyamukha hill. It has crystal clear water. Rsyamukha range extends upto the south of Pampa lake. These are the details given by Valmiki. Now Pampa is considered to be the same as the river Pennair, near which stands the Rsyamukha mountain. The river is known to rise from tanks; the northern part especially from a stone tank in the centre of Chanderdoorg and it has been identified with Rsyamukha. The name was subsequently transferred from the tank to the river. Valmiki also mentions about Pampa nadi.¹⁵

2.3 Kishkinda: Kibe locates Kishkinda at a village "Kando", 92 miles from Chitrakuta¹⁶; Dr. Bhandarkar gives two places for Kishkinda, one at "Kekind" 15 miles from "chokdi" a place in Balida District, Rajasthan¹⁷ and another at "Anegundi" on the left bank of Thungabhadra¹⁸. Dr. Hiralal locates Kishkinda somewhere in the Bilaspur district¹⁹. D.P. Mishra locates it near modern Malkangiri or Matangagiri east of Pastar²⁰. Except, Anegundi, all other theories are based on "popular beliefs" of the respective localities and tradition. Similar beliefs prevail in all four states of Southern India. F.E. Pargiter in, "The Geography of Rama's exile", describes in detail about the sojourn of Rama from Ayodhya to Lanka identifying the names of towns, rivers and mountains with modern existing ones. He identifies Kishkinda with some place at or near Bellary. R. Bruce Foote also mentions about this. After independence, our archaeologists have also found abundant evidences to prove the neolithic culture in this area²¹. Prehistoric monuments found in Bellary include a large number of stone circles and dolmens and half of which are holed variety. They are riddled with old workings of gold, copper and iron. Mention may be made of a celt factory where not only weapons of offence and

defence were made in a polished state, but others like beads, buttons, discus, marbles, pendants and vessels, besides a large number of human and animal figures, show that their civilisation was far higher than that of Palaeolithic Age. These stone implements are also consistent with the Vanaras' culture. Gorresio, Wheeler, M. N. Ray and others regard vanaras as the non-Aryan hill tribes of Southern India. Vanaras also used gold ornaments²². Valmiki describes the usage of stone and stone implements by Vanaras²³. Kishkinda was a mahapuri and was situated in a charming surrounding. The approaches to the city laid through a dense forest, abounding in hills and dales, rills and caverns infested with wild beasts.²⁴ The Rsyamukha Ashram, the abode of Anjana devi, the Ashram of Matanga rishi, the cave dwelling of Sabari were all said to have been here (in Bellary district) and are identified as such even today. In view of the above the identification of Kishkinda at or near Bellary is not only consistent with the movements of Rama and the description of Kishkinda as given in Ramayana, but also supported by proven neolithic cultural evidences.

2.4 Sahya, Malaya and Mahendra mountains: Sahya mountain was on the plain of Lavanasamudra, and is identified with a part of Western Ghats. Rama with his army crossed this mountain. Valmiki clearly mentions that Malaya mountain was south of Vindhya. In Yudhakanda he describes about the surroundings of Malaya mountain with flora and fauna. It is identified with the southern portion of the Ghats running from the south of Mysore and forming the eastern boundary of Travancore. Bhavabhuti says that the river Kaveri²⁵ encircles it. Kalidasa calls the mountains Malaya and Dadura 'the two breasts of the southern region'. Dadura is, therefore, that portion of the Ghats which forms the south-eastern boundary of Mysore. After Malay mountain was Mahendra mountain. Rama and his army crossing these mountains reached the southern ocean²⁶. Mt. Malaya is mentioned as the southern boundary (a) with the Eastern country in east, the Maru or the Rajaputna desert in the west and Praleyadri (Himalayas) in the north in a verse used in the Pala inscriptions describing a few kings including Vighrapala II (10th cent) as well as (b) with Mt. Kailasa in the north, the mythical sun - set mountain in the west and the mythical sun - rise mountain in the east in the description of King Bhoja (11th cent) in the Paramara epigraphs²⁷.

2.5 Tamraparni river: Valmiki clearly mentions that Kaveri was in front of Malaya mountain and to reach the wonderful gate of the city of the Pandyas one had to cross the Tamraparni river infested with alligators. This exactly fits with the geography of Tamilnadu, where we can find Kaveri first and then Tamraparni among the list

of rivers in order. The name "Tamraparni" applied to Sri Lanka in the past²⁸, seems to have connection with the river Tamraparni.

2.6 Pandya Kingdom: There are verses which specifically mention about Pandya King and his Kingdom. But, when Rama marched with army towards south, the kingdoms of Andhras, Pundras, Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras are not at all mentioned. Only copious description of trees, creepers, flowers, animals and hills is given. From this we can understand that he did not go through that direction at all. Moreover, Valmiki repeatedly and specifically mentions that they went in southerly direction and south - western direction²⁹, through forest and hilly areas avoiding the precincts of cities and rural areas³⁰. If they would have gone through Pandya Kingdom, then definitely there would have been a mention about it. F. E. Pargiter also aptly remarks, "Again except in the geographical cantos which I will notice presently, no mention is made of Pandyas though their Kingdom was one of the oldest in south India³¹." This implies that Rama reached southern ocean by following the route through Western Ghats.

2.7 Agasthya and Agasthya Ashram: Agasthya and Agasthya Ashram are mentioned four times at four different places in Ramayana. Asking for the location of Agasthya Ashram from Agasthya's brother, Rama reached Agasthya Ashram and met him there³². Agasthya appears second time at Janasthana along with other Rishis and praises Rama for killing Kara, Dusana and Tirisira³³. Sugriva, while giving direction to his army mentions, "... (besides the list of rivers and kingdoms) ... Kaveri, in front of Malaya mountain Agasthya Ashram, crossing the river Tamraparni, the wonderful gate of the city of Pandyas can be seen³⁴." Once again his abode is mentioned for the fourth time by Sugriva as, "... beyond Lanka ... after Puspika, Suryavan, Vaidyuta .. stands Kunja mountain on which Agasthya dwells³⁵." Thus, it is clear that Agasthya himself seems to be moving towards south. According to Hindu astronomers, the movement of Agasthya nakshatra (modern Canopus) was associated with some important event and the Agasthya chara with the procession of Equinoxes. Even Whitney, though he could not understand the significance, remarks, "... that it should still maintain itself in many of the astronomical text books, is however, too striking and significant a circumstance, in estimating the character of the ancient and native Hindu astronomy³⁶". Whatever may be the significance, the movement of Agasthya to south and his role for the origin and development of Tamil culture cannot be ignored.

2.8 The Southernmost boundary of India as per inscriptions: It is well known that the Indians had the con-

ception of a "Chakravarthi - Kshetra, i. e. the sphere of influence of an Indian imperial ruler covering the whole of the Indian sub-continent. Kautilya's Arthashastra describes it as bounded in the north by Himavat and in the south by the ocean (i. e. the southern or Indian ocean) and Rajasekhara's Kavya-mimamsa gives its northern and southern boundaries respectively as Bindusaras, which is located in the Himalayas and Kumaripuri or Cape comorin in the present Tamilnadu State. Like this many literary and epigraphic records mention either Indian ocean, Cape comorin, Mahendragiri, the Sethu, Suvela, Simhala - dvipa or the Malaya mountain as the southern boundary of India. Among these, the most frequently mentioned is Rama's Sethu or bridge which is placed at the southern end of the Indian Peninsula in both literary and epigraphic records³⁷. So early as in 7th century the boundary of India in south was given as "Sethu bandana". Definitely it could not be located in north. If the kings had thought Lanka and Sethu to be in and around Amarakantaka or any other place in Madhya Pradesh as some modern scholars claim, then they would have not mentioned "Setu" as the southern boundary. Atleast the South Indian Kings would have rather mentioned that the "Setu" was their northern boundary instead of southern. But, none had done so. The noted archaeologist H. D. Sankalia has accepted the following facts on the basis of his "archaeological approach"³⁸: There is no doubt about the existence of Ayodhya and other cities mentioned in the Ramayana such as Kausambi, Mithila, Kanyakubja atleast by 1000 - 1700 B. C. and the core of the Ramayana story - viz Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and the exile of Rama with Sita and her being kidnapped by

Ravana was true and was known at this time, If it was a myth, convention or tradition, all kings, scholars and others would have not been nurturing this for thousands of years. All these prove that the Sethu was south of ancient Bharat and not in Madhya Pradesh.

2.9 Valmiki's Southern Ocean and its region:

Valmiki in his description about sea or ocean, repeatedly and specifically uses the words sagara, samudra, varunalaya, arnava, maha - arnava, salilakaram, mahodadha and amba. Other descriptions include expansive ocean, dreadful ocean, roaring sea, the shore with rocks washed away by big waves, wind troubled oceanic waves, ocean's billows, abode of Timis, ocean with shark Timis, big and small fishes, tortoise, alligators and other aquatic species. This clearly shows that Valmiki described about an ocean in the south of India and not an ordinary lake as suggested by Kibe and his supporters.

3.1 In view of the above, it is evident that Rama travelled to Ravana's Lanka, passing through south India following the route through Western Ghats and accompanied forests and avoiding cities and rural areas. This is amply borne out by the various evidences adduced to above. Many Tamil scholars consider that Valmiki was a Tamilian³⁹. Through the mouth of Sugriva, he clearly describes the geography of South India including Pandya kingdom. Moreover, the common rites and rituals followed in the north and south India, since time immemorial and before the coming of Rama to south not only establish the north - south connection, but also prove the oneness of Ancient Indian culture.

1. List enclosed at the end of the paper.

2. VRM III - 7 - 2, III - 10 - 2, III - 54 - 7, III - 73 - 3, IV - 41 - 1

3. H. Parker in "Ancient Ceylon" Asian Educational services, New Delhi 1981, P - 6

4. VRM III - 48 - 10.

5. VRM III - 42 - 9, 10 & 11, III - 48 3 & 4, III - 48, 10, III - 54 - 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 9 & 12.

6. VRM IV - 48 - 1 to 6 IV - 49 - 17 to 19., Cantoes 58 & 59, 63 & 64.

7. VRM VI - 4 - 59

8. VRM VI - 4 - 72, 73, 75 to 78, 79 to 83, VI - 4 - 109 to 113, VI - 4 - 84, 85, 92, 94.

9. H.D.Sankalia, "Ramayana - Myth or Reality?" Peoples' publishing House, New Delhi, 1973, PP. 17-19.

10. D.P. Mishra, "The Search for Lanka", pp 29 - 30.

11. VRM IV - 9 - 18 & 19.

12. VRM IV 9 - 25 & 26

13. VRM IV - 27 - 16

14. VRM VI - 4 - 59.

15. VRM III - 6 - 17

16. M.V.Kibe, Lanka discovered, P.13.

17. Dr.D.R. Bhandarkar, "Essays on Oriental Subjects", Oriental Book Agency, Poona 1937, P.52

18. Ibid, P.56.

19. Dr. Hiralal, Ibid, P.153

20. D.P. Mishra, Op. cit, P.47 - 49

21. M.S.Nagaraja Rao, "Progress of Archaeology in Karnataka", 1956 - 1972, P.8

22. VRM IV - 33 - 23, IV - 11 - 61, IV - 12 - 6.

23. VRM VI - 58 - 9, IV - 11 - 42, IV - 11 - 43 to 46

24. VRM IV - 31 - 16, IV - 13 - 5 to 12

25. "Mahavir Chavita", 5.3, Borooah's Edition.
 26. VRM VI - 39 - 73 & 96.
 27. D.C. Sircar, "Ramayana in Inscriptions" - Ramayana Traditions in Asia Sahitya Akademi, N.w Delhi, 1980, P.331 - 332.
 28. Ashokan Inscription - 3rd Century B.C.
 29. VRM III - 64 - 23; 69 - 1; VI - 4 - 26 & 43.
 30. VRM VI - 4 - 39.
 31. F.E.Pargiter, "The Geography of Rama's exile", JRAS, 1894, P.267.
 32. VRM III - 11 - 32 to 36, III - 11 - 37 & 38, III - 11 - 53, 54, 81 & 84.
 33. VRM III - 30 - 33 to 36
 34. VRM IV - 41 - 14 to 19.
 35. VRM IV - 41 - 34 & 35
 36. V.Thiruvengkatacharya, Popular Astronomy, S.Viswanathan, 1958, P.140.
 37. D.C.Sircar, Op.cit, P.330
 38. H.D. Sankalia, Op.cit, P.62
 39. M. Ganapathy Pillai "Vanmikiyar Thamizhare" Paari Nilayam, Madras, 1966, PP. 1 - 34.

The existing theories about the location of Lanka are as follows:

Author	Title of work	Location
1.F.E.Pargiter	The Geography of Rama's Exile, 1894.	Ceylon (present Sri Lanka).
2.N.C.Das	Ancient geography of Asia Compiled from Valmiki Ramayana, 1896.	))
3.H.Jacobi.	Das Ramayana (English Translation), 1893.	Assam
4.M.V.Kibe	Ravana's Lanka discovered, 1914 & 1928.	Amarakantaka, a peak of the Vindhya range.
5.Jogendra Chandra Ghosh	A note on Ravana's Lanka discovered, 1938.	))
6.Dr.Hiralal	The situation of Ravana's Lanka, 1937.	))
7.C.V.Vaidya	The Riddle of the Ramayana	Ceylon (Sri Lanka).
8.S.B.Dikshat	Bharatvarsiya Bhuvarnana	))
9.M.S.Aney	Ramayana Tradition in Ceylon	))
10.V.H.Vader	Situation of Ravana's Lanka on the Equator, 1926	Maldives islands.
11.T.Paramshiv Iyer	Ramayana and Lanka	Near Jabalpur.
12.N.S.Adhikari	Lanka of Ravana	Sumatra in Indonesia.
13.Dhani Nivat	The Rama Jataka	Lankasak in Malay Peninsula.
14.C.N.Mehta	Sundarakandam or the flight of Hanuman to Lanka via Sunda islands by Air Route	Somewhere in Australia
15.Sachchidananda Sahai	The Khavay Thuraphi.	Outside the territory of Jambudvipa.
16.G.S.Sampath Iyengar	Kishkinda to Lanka	A city on the submerged land on equator
17.H.D.Sankalia	Ramayana Myth or Reality ?	Supporting the views of Kibe, Paramshiv, Iyer and Hiralal.
18.D.P.Mishra	The Search for Lanka	At the mouth of Godhavari on a submerged island.

The list is only illustrative and not exhaustive.
 Only popular theories are given.